Depot Town Rag

Volume 22, Number 7

September 2009

Selling the neighborhood

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

On the right track

[Source: SEMCOG bulletin]

The passenger train stop planned for Depot Town in 2010 is still on track. Michigan Department of Transportation and South Eastern Michigan Council of Governments have hired the engineering firm Quandel Consultants to help oversee the Ann Arbor/ Detroit Regional Rail Project and execute various preconstruction and construction activities. The team is developing and implementing 12 separate plans for project components such as safety, quality management, and operations.

Canadian National and Norfolk Southern Railroads have agreed in principle to terms that allow start-up passenger service for four round trips per day. Memoranda of Understandings will soon be in place to allow beginning improvements, followed by detailed contracts.

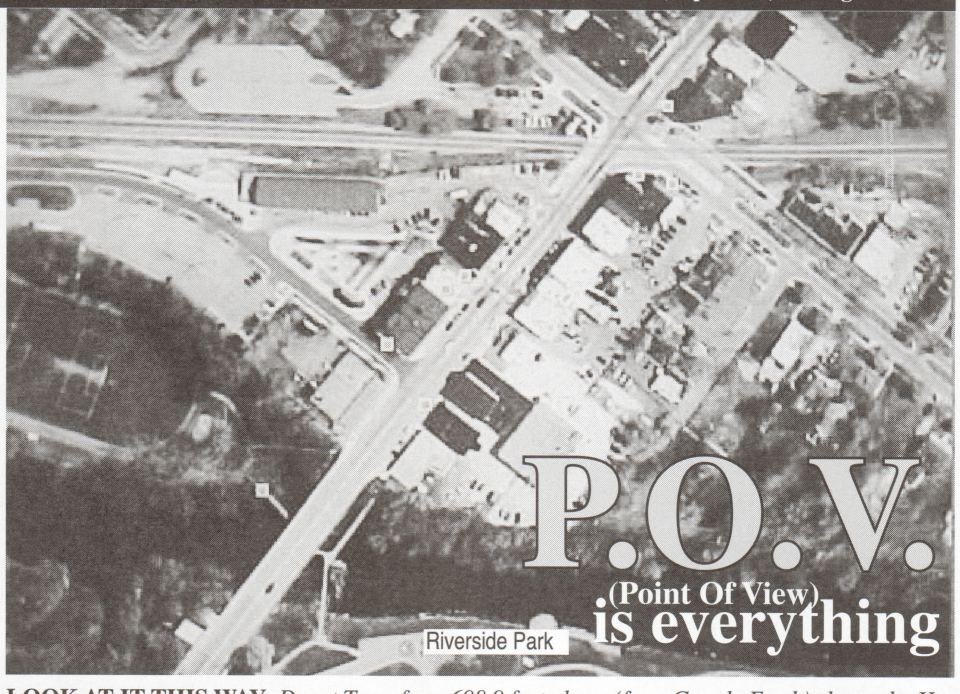
As a result, SEMCOG now knows all required infrastructure improvements and has begun pursuing capital funds for their implementation. Engineering consultants are already under contract and have begun preconstruction activities for some of the major improvements.

A final analysis of the entire line is being conducted to optimize train schedules that will best meet rider needs.

MDOT has entered into a contract with Great Lakes Central Railroad for the leasing and refurbishing of the rail cars. Delivery of the first train set is expected in late November of 2009 with the reminder being delivered in mid-2010 for safety and performance testing prior to beginning service.

SEMCOG and MDOT are working with the host communities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Metro Airport, Dearborn/Henry Ford, and Detroit to identify necessary improvements and establish standards that meet all system performance, safety, and ADA requirements.

The City of Ypsilanti has decided its new station in Depot Town will be on the south (Frog Island) side *[continued overleaf]*



LOOK AT IT THIS WAY: *Depot Town from 698.9 feet above (from Google Earth) shows the Huron River, Frog Island, streets, buildings, parking lots and more. It looks a bit different when we're on the ground. And it looks a lot different from across the River, from Downtown, or from far-away Ann Arbor. Readers who only know us from reading about the district on the Internet—wherever on Earth they may be—probably hold yet another point of view.*

Our hillbilly heritage survives sticks 'n' stones

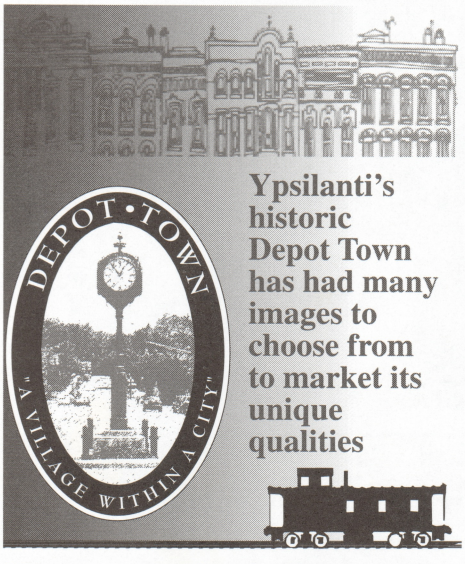
Spring's announcement of this month's "Ypsitucky Jamboree" got more press than press agents could hope for. News media across the country wondered how much self-deprecation Ypsilantians could tolerate to celebrate a portion of local history long ignored. Naming this month's bluegrass festival with a sobriquet detractors had coined to denigrate us seemed to backfire on just about everybody.

One octogenarian opined, "Everyone's response seemed based on how they were treated when they first came to Ypsilanti."

A blogger predicted the event would be followed by rebel flags and KKK/Nazi rallies. Another suggested it was akin to Auschwitz holding a barbeque as a fund-raiser.

Cooler heads prevailed. CDC board members made the September 4 & 5 event's name innocuous with "The Jamboree."

The "-tucky" remains silent like the "r" in "kitchen."



Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town has had many images to choose from to market its unique qualities

"People are like buildings; the strongest aren't the rigid ones, they're the ones that give just a bit." *-Carolyn Hax, The Washington Post*

Movie star discovered down in Depot Town

"Hicks" fit in just fine in Ypsi's side streets. In Basinger's Depot Town truck: "Grampa" played by J. David Moeller and "Young Betty Waters" played by Bailee Madison.

Hollywood producers spied Thomas Basinger's 1948 Chevy pickup truck parked in front of his house on River Street and asked to use it in the filming of Hillary Swank's "Betty Ann Waters" this summer. Thomas cleaned it up for the occasion but they didn't want a newly reconditioned sparkly clean truck; they wanted a rode-hard-on-a-dirt-road kind of truck. Thomas kept their "Hollywood make-up" on it all the rest of the season.

When actors and techies filled the tables and bar stools here last summer, many were amazed at how they looked "just like us." Now we wonder what those movies are going to be about. Were they looking for a pleasantly gentrified community (as some see our neighborhood)? Or were they seeking a bunch of out-of-work losers barely surviving in a run-down small town?

Only the actual screening will tell. See you at the movies!

www.depottown.org

YOUR CITY HERE: Really bad slogans proliferate around the world

-excerpts from "Jane" in Advertising, *11/12/06*

The worst city nicknames and slogans in America, w/ a couple of other countries' lesser moments, thrown in just for fun

Cordova, AK: The Clam Town
Better, I suppose, than the Crab Town. That honour goes to...

Annapolis, MD: Crabtown

Louisville, KY: We've Got It
Oh, man. I've got it too. Do you know where to get a prescription for that?

Lyons, KS: The Unexpected Pleasure
This generally comes right before discovering that You've Got It.

Wichita, KS: We Got the Goods
This is what you're thinking before The Unexpected Pleasure.

San Francisco, CA:
Baghdad by the Bay
When Herb Caen coined the term, "Baghdad by the Bay," the term probably didn't elicit road-side bombs and flag burning. Now, the city's moniker just confirms neocons' idea that, like Seattleites, those in the Bay area are America-haters.

Wairoa, New Zealand:
The Way New Zealand used to be
Small, economically depressed and full of sheep.

Castroville, CA:
Artichoke Center of the World
You don't have a rose garden or uncanny amount of sunshine that you could have bragged about?

Sumner, WA:
Rhubarb Pie Capital of the USA
It's better than Teenage Pregnancy Capital of the Northwest.

Gallup, NM:
Drunk Driving Capital of America

Hamilton, New Zealand:
More Than You'd Expect
Perhaps accurate in that we've never expected very much from the city whose football team call themselves The Mooloo Men.

Noxubee County, MS:
Home of the Dancing Rabbit Festival and Magnolia Pilgrimage Enough said, maybe?

Sunderland, Great Britain:
Charva Capital of the World

Right track *[continued from page one]*

of the tracks adjacent to the historic Freighthouse which is undergoing refurbishment.

MDOT and SEMCOG continue developing environmental clearance documents for all elements of the project and are continuing in the selection and development of an agreement with an operating entity. While much has been completed but much is left to do:

- Finalize train schedules and further develop feeder route service.
- Conduct meetings with all community and additional stakeholder representatives.
- Finalize capital and operating costs.
- Develop and implement funding, branding, and marketing strategies.
- Develop operating and construction agreements with host railroads.
- Arrange train runs to special event s this fall to demonstrate the service (e.g. Michigan football game, Tiger baseball game, or a Henry Ford event).

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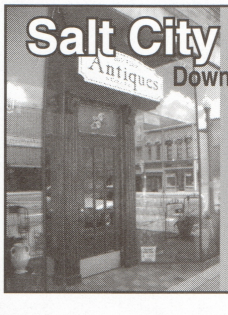

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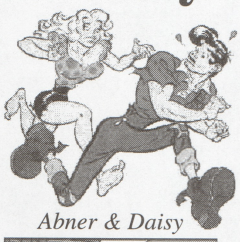
"-tucky" kerfuffel reexamined our branding ethics



Abner & Daisy

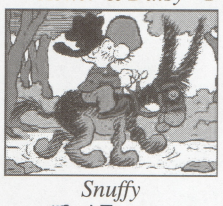
Newspaper comics were popular showcases for humor about southern hill folks

• Al Capp's *Lil' Abner* evolved into a Broadway musical and was produced by many local high schools

• *Snuffy Smith*, created by Billy DeBeck, continued by Fred Lasswell and John Rose

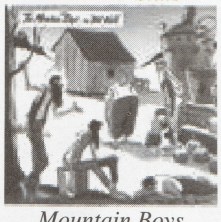
•*Abbie 'n' Slats* had drawings as intricate as woodcuts (and equally wooden plots) by Raeburn Van Buren

• Paul Webb's *Mountain Boys* slouching on moonshine tanker cars and around outhouses, drinking "hootch" from jugs

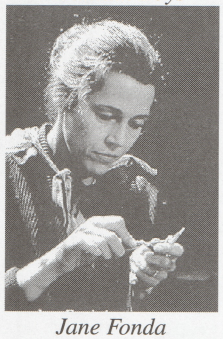


Snuffy

Abbie 'n' Slats



Mountain Boys



Jane Fonda

Too-long tv series:

• *The Beverly Hillbillies*, by Paul Henning, featuring Irene Ryan and Buddy Ebsen, still in re-runs today.

TV's Clampett family

Books and movies alter image

• The focus began to lose its cruel humor when Jane Fonda starred in a film made from Harriett Arnow's *The Dollmaker*. The A2 writer never told which WWII factory housing project was her focus, but folks in Ypsilanti, Royal Oak, and Flint were sure it was theirs. Compared with John Steinbeck, many describe the novel as one of "the saddest books" ever written. Amazon says "...a big book, full of vividly drawn characters and masterful scenes—a passionate denunciation of industrialization and war, and a tribute to a woman's love for her children and the land."

You just might be from Ypsitucky if...

...you can name all the fixin's in the Smoke House Blues recipe
...you leave your street shoes just inside the door
...you would rather sit on a front porch than a back patio
...you have been known to take long afternnon naps on that porch
...all the family dogs since childhood appear in your scrapbook
...you wish KFC still spelled out their proper name
...you wave at passing cars in the neighborhood
...your favorite summertime drink is "sweet tea"
...your family sings together in the kitchen
...you make eye contact with your "pleases" and "thank-yous"
...you adore the bacon at Ypsi's Bomber restaurant
...you introduce yourself to new neighbors
...you sing along with the hymns you learned in Sunday School
...you're sure you could improve on Jeff Foxworthy's lists

MEDIA THEORY #1:

"Bigots feel better when they read about someone who is dumber than they are." *-Sidewalker*

MEDIA THEORY #2:

Comedian Chris Rock, paraphrased: "Ypsi had a funeral for "-tucky." Well, today is Easter!"

MEDIA THEORY #3:

This is just a matter of "social conditioning and cultural conformity" *-Rick Steves*

The Hatfields and the Coys; were they restless Ypsi boys?

Bing Crosby must have known about us when he popularized his *Feudin' and Fightin'* tune in the 1940s:

Feudin' and fussin' and a-fightin,'
Sometimes it gets to be excitin,'
Don't like them ornery neighbors
down by the creek,
We'll be plumb out of neighbors
by next week.
Feudin' and fightin' and a-fussin,'
That's all that's goin' on with us'n.
We are such neighborly people,
peaceful and sweet,
Except when we happen to meet.

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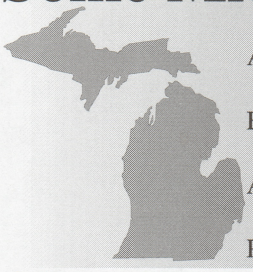
Some Michigan burgs branded themselves!



Ann Arbor: A^2, Tree Town
Atlanta: Elk Capital
Belding: Apple Capital
Birmingham: Phony Colony
Cadillac: Cattletracks
Davison: City of Flags
Flint, the birthplace of Gn'l Motors, also claim The Auto City
Gaylord: The Alpine Village
Grand Rapids: Furniture City, with radio station WOOD
Jackson brags of being the Birthplace of the Republican Party.
Newberry: Moose Capital.
Niles: City of Four Flags.
Onaway: Sturgeon Capital

In the next *Rag*:

Hometown news papers:

Where did they come from and where did they go?

A brand name should:

• **be protected** (or protectable) under trademark law. "Depot Towns" are so numerous that anyone who has a depot—no matter its condition—can use the name.

• **be easy to pronounce**. Dee-Po. Cool! Just ad "Town." Some say Dep-o. Wrong.

• **be easy to remember.** With only one depot in most towns, we're the only game in you-know-where.

• **be easy to recognize.** Architecture, steam trains, anything of railroadiana moves the image forward.

• **be easy to translate into all languages where the brand will be used**. A2 identifies with Depot Town even with two old depots of their own.

• **attract attention.** Sing it, draw it, dance to it. Just don't fall off the table.

• **suggest product benefits** or suggest usage. Get the kids involved; they love trains. Wave at the caboose, even though it's no longer connected to the main line.

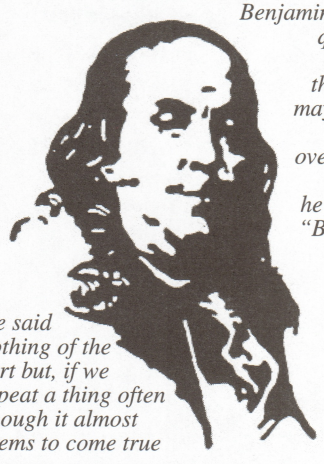
• **suggest the company or product image.** Caboose art, engineer hats, steam engine pictures, and those annoying whistles.

• **distinguish the product's positioning relative to the competition.** There are no train tracks at Briarwood or Arborland.

• **be attractive.** Get out those brooms and paintbrushes. Wash the windows. Smile when you talk to people on the street.

• **stand out among a group of other brands.** Big Box stores pay a fortune for this kind of uniqueness, but few achieve it.

Ben Franklin



Benjamin Franklin's quote on the east wall of the Sidetrack may have been cleaned up over the years. Many think he really said, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to pee."

He said nothing of the sort but, if we repeat a thing often enough it almost seems to come true

Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
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The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrill Guerra, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org

DTA's Annual Meeting: 6:30 p.m Wednesday, 16 September @Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

Historical name-calling

They turned a negative into a positive

In his new book, *The Toledo War: The First Michigan-Ohio Rivalry*, Don Faber gives an early example of turning negatives into positives:

In *Events of April-June 1835*, "…It was at Phillips Corners that name-calling between Ohio and Michigan first took on the Wolverines/Buckeyes coloration. Stories had circulated in Ohio depicting the Michiganians as wolverines, known to be vicious and ornery critters with disgusting eating habits. Michiganians gleefully took to the epithet and turned it around and, saying the wolverine was tough, cunning, and a fearless predator. Engagements subsequent to Phillips Corners found more usage of wolverines as a term of contempt among the Ohioans. The nickname stuck, and eventually the state university in Ann Arbor assumed title to the name for its athletic teams."

As if a precursor to the "Ypsitucky" epithet, Faber notes that, "Ohio did give us the nickname Wolverines around this time, thinking it a derogatory name. But Michiganians liked it, thinking of it as mean, ornery and unafraid."

[*The Toledo War,* by Don Faber, former editor of *The Ann Arbor News*, The University of Michigan Press, 2008, www.press.umich.edu, $24.95]

All Depots 'R' Not Us! Depot Town, the Depot Town Association, Inc., and its committees are NOT AFFILIATED with any of the following: Bagel Depot, Beer Depot, Carpet Depot, Diploma Depot, Drug Depot, Flower Depot, Hair-do Depot, Home Depot, Milk Depot, Nail Depot, Pet Depot, Shoe Depot, Sunglasses Depot, Tattoo Depot, Tropical Fish Depot, Vinyl Siding Depot. Ours is that old, run-down depot in Ypsi.

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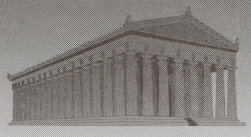
Branding Ypsi may be harder than branding the Republican Party

Local expectations & *outcomes*

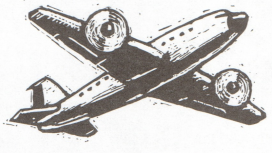
Phase I – French Jesuit, Robert la Salle, canoes down the Huron River
- Create a shortcut from Lake Michigan to Fort Detroit
- Blackflies, sickness, portages, unfriendly locals
- *Retreat to Quebec*

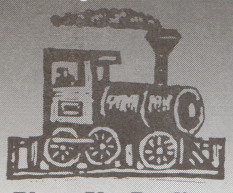
Phase II – Godfroy's Trading Post
- Trade beaver pelts with Indians
- Killed all the beavers and most of the Indians
- *Burn trading post, start up sport teams*



Phase III – Adopt "Ypsilanti" name
- Assume name of popular Greek hero, Demetrius Ypsilanti(s?)
- Identify with democratic parallels, classical architectural styles
- Give it a good try with the Ypsilanti Greek Theatre
- *Ridicule Greeks, homoerotic stereotypes from first Olympics, theatrical financiers leave town*

Phase IV – Maintain status quo
- Act like Andy Hardy lives here
- WWII brings factories, southern laborers; subdivide mansions into rooming houses, resentful establishment coins the "Ypsitucky" slur
- *Stop world-wide facism, deface historic properties, denigrate patriots' war effort*





Phase V – Decline of railroads
- Depot district declines too
- Rough bars, motorcycle club, TV repair shops
- Avoid the railroad district
- Paint up buildings, celebrate railroad heritage
- Street events, community participation
- *Turn negatives into positives by shining light on stereotypes*

Phase VI- Historic Preservation ethic
- Create historic district ordinance
- Tax breaks, recognition plaques, home & garden tours, annual festival on history
- *District and neighborhoods return to viability*

Phases still being addressed around town
- "Urban Renewal" divides community racially
- Big Box shopping centers nullify central business districts
- Those dreadful "Hipsilanti Cool City" banners

Phase VII – Defuse "hillbilly" stereotyping
- Michigan Elvis-Fest (Presley was a Tennessean) runs in Riverside Park for a decade, contributes big bucks to City park funds
- Celebrate southern cultural contributions by shining light on old "-tucky" sobriquet
- Sunlight is the best disinfectant; we're not growing mushrooms here!
- *CDC capitulates; mushrooms continue to thrive*

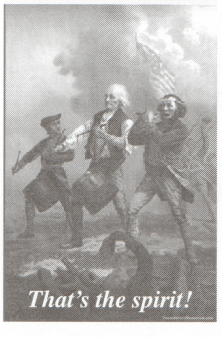
Brits' insults to Colonials made complimentary

Yankee Doodle went to town,
A-Riding on a pony;
He stuck a feather in his cap,
And called it macaroni.

The lyric's origins were in a pre-Revolutionary War song originated by British military officers to mock the disheveled, disorganized colonial "Yankees" with whom they served in the French and Indian War.

The word *doodle* first appeared in the early seventeenth century and may have come from the Low German *dudel* or *dödel*, meaning "fool" or "simpleton". It is believed that the tune comes from the nursery rhyme *Lucy Locket*. 'Macaroni' was a contemporary slang for foppishness.

One version of the Yankee Doodle lyrics is attributed to Doctor Richard Shuckburgh, a British Army surgeon, who wrote the song after witnessing the unprofessional appearance of Colonel Thomas Fitch, Jr., the son of Connecticut Governor Thomas Fitch, who arrived in Albany in 1755 with the Connecticut militia.



That's the spirit!

The Boston *Journal of the Times* wrote about a British band declaring "that Yankee Doodle song was the Capital Piece of their band music" and the tune soon became the most popular pro-Colonial hit of the day.

Who knows? Maybe Ypsilantians will be able to turn the "-tucky" insult into a lovable term some day.

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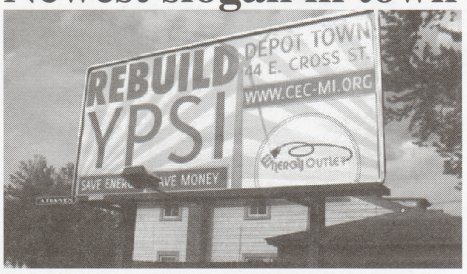
Newest slogan in town



Billboard on W. Michigan highlights Depot Town's newest enterprise, Energy Outlet

Rebuild Ypsilanti is part of Rebuild Michigan, a network of community partnerships, made up of local organizations and businesses, that save money by saving energy. These voluntary partnerships, working with the State of Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, & Economic Growth's Energy Office, choose the best ways to improve the energy efficiency of commercial, government, and apartment buildings. Rebuild supports them with business and technical tools and customized assistance.

To date, over 540 organizations across the State have become Rebuild partners. Enrolled partners have pledged more than 100 million square feet to energy efficiency projects and to date have invested more than $69 million in efficiency projects, with first year savings totaling more than $9 million.

Ypsilanti Historical Society
Museum and Archives
(free admission)

Hours: 2:00 to 5:00pm
Tuesday thru Sunday

220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org
Museum: 734-482-4990 *Archives: 734-217-8236*

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RAGTIME Coming events

September 4 & 5
The Jamboree

September 15
Last one of the season
Motorcycle Mania

Sept 17
Last one of the season
Cruise Night

October 3
Antique Truck Show

Marketing our historic Freighthouse
Saturday, October 3
Trunk 'N' Treasure Fall Festival

10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

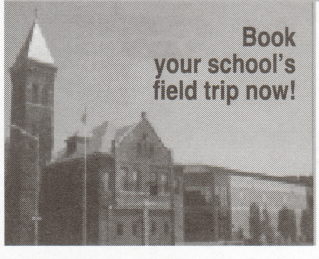
• Antique Road Show in the Freighthouse Café
Sponsored by Schmidt's Antiques
$5 for 1st item, $3 for each other items
Oral appraisal
Written appraisals by appointment w/ fees

• Junk 'N' Your Trunk
Sell whatever you can fit in your trunk
$15 per car, $20 per van/truck
Provide your own tables
Limited Space/First Come, First Served
More info: dslone54@hotmail.com

What a season it's been!

Thanks to all who helped to make it happen:
Ypsilanti Area Street Rods Show 'N' Shine, Ypsi PRIDE Day, Ypsilanti Symphony Pops Concert, Memorial Day Procession, Orphan Car Show, Motorcycle Manias, Cruise Nights, Ypsilanti Community Band Concert, Michigan Camaro Superfest, Independence Day Parade, Relay for Life, Michigan ElvisFest, Shadow Art Fair, Michigan Brewers' Festival, Band Organ Rally, Kelly Miller Circus, Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, Annual Fire Truck Muster

MICHIGAN FIREHOUSE MUSEUM



Book your school's field trip now!

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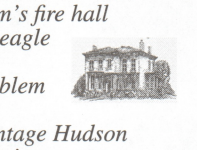
Sunday 12-4
Closed Monday

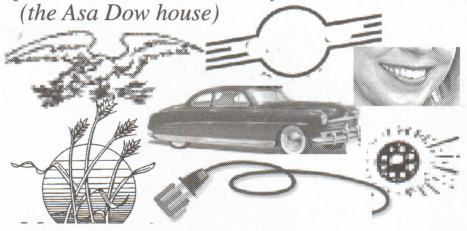
Adults $3
FF/Sr/Stu $2
6-15 $1.50
Under 6 Free

Local logos

We don't even have to read their names any more. The pictographs work as well for us as they did for cavemen. Make a quick survey and don't peek at the answers until you have walked the block one more time with your eyes open:



Cafe Luwak's kopi luwak (weasel)
City Body's vintage Hudson
Clover Computers
Enchanted Florists flower
Energy Outlet's power cord
Farmers' Market cornucopia
Food Co-op's wheat
Dentist Kimberly Rice's smile
Leave No Stone's rock pile
Michigan Firehouse Museum's fire hall
Olde Towne Coin & Gold's eagle
Queen of Hearts's chef
Sidetrack's railroadiana emblem
World of Rocks' diamond
Ypsilanti Auto Musuem's vintage Hudson
Ypsilanti's Historical Society's museum (the Asa Dow house)



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